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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 000255

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2027
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: VP ABRUPTLY ANNOUNCES PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY

REF: ASUNCION 0252

Classified By: DCM MICHAEL J. FITZPATRICK; Reasons 1.4(b),(d)

¶1. (C) Vice President Luis Castiglioni abruptly announced March 28 his 2008 candidacy for President. Highlighting his campaign platform and plans for Paraguay. Castiglioni said that he wants to "build a nation that will promote and give protection to private business in order to help create jobs and enrich the population." He also noted that the country must not be a paternalist state but should assume a role in helping regulate the distribution of wealth to reduce inequality. He committed himself to modernizing the country by seeking private investment in public utilities and government-owned enterprises as well as developing public/private partnerships.

¶2. (C) VP Advisor Juan Facetti told PolOff shortly after the announcement that Castiglioni had decided to announce today after a "fake poll" showed Blanca Ovelar as the top vote getter in a Colorado primary with VP Castiglioni in third behind Goli Stroessner. Castiglioni had already held a meeting with his senior staff March 26 and decided to announce his candidacy based on his having secured the support of Sen. Nelson Argana (leader of the Colorado Reconciliation Movement (MRC) - the largest movement in the Colorado Party) and tentative support from Alfredo "Goli" Stroessner (leader of the Colorado Peace and Progressive Movement). The official announcement was scheduled for after Easter, unless President Duarte began making political moves to advance the candidacy of a Castiglioni competitor. Duarte took that step with the poll and on March 27 when he began calling Colorado Precinct Presidents asking them to begin to campaign for Blanca Ovelar, Minister of Education (Duarte's choice for President). According to Facetti, Castiglioni has said that he will resign immediately as Vice President if Duarte moves to thwart his campaign efforts. (Note: He will have to resign no later than November anyway, in order to run in May 2008.)

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Castiglioni has effectively preempted President Duarte's official announcement of support for Blanca Ovelar, putting Duarte on the defensive and forcing him to respond or backdown. No doubt the VP is counting on the support he enjoys from the MRC and other factions within the Colorado Party to give Duarte pause about continuing to lobby for Ovelar. The President is proud though and does not take well to having the tables turned on him, especially by one of his own, however tenuous the relationship. The Colorado Party is well accustomed to internecine fights. We should know soon whether Castiglioni effectively averted a new struggle or prompted the ugly row to begin sooner. END COMMENT.
CASON